

RURAL SERVANTS IN THE 18TH CENTURY MAHARASHTRIAN VILLAGE—DEMIURGIC OR JAJMANI SYSTEM ?*

By HIROSHI FUKAZAWA**

I. *Introduction*

When we glance over the mode of employment of rural servants in Indian villages as depicted in socio-economic writings since the middle of the last century, we may discern broadly two different theories on the subject. One is the old theory that tends to regard the servants as employed by the village community as a territorial whole, such servants being called in this article demiurgic servants following Max Weber's terminology. The other theory is the new one that is inclined to consider the servants employed by certain specific families (jajmans according to W. H. Wiser).

We shall begin with examining what the representative writings in line of the old theory have mentioned about the mode of employment of servants in Indian villages.

Karl Marx in his *Capital* (first ed. in 1867) has written what follows about the Indian village community and its servants on the basis of two books on India written by two British administrators in 1810's and 1850's respectively.

"The constitution of these communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form, the land is tilled in common, and the produce divided among the members. At the same time, spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the 'chief inhabitant', who is judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the bookkeeper who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official, who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through, and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water-overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin, who conducts the religious services; the schoolmaster, who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calendar-Brahmin, or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed-time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber, the washerman, who washes clothes, the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. *This*

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** Assistant Professor (*Jokyōju*) in South Asian Studies.

dozen of individuals is maintained at the expence of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded, on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land. The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that in manufactures is impossible, since the smith and the carpenter, etc., find an unchanging market, and at the most there occur, according to the sizes of the villages, two or three of each, instead of one.”¹ (italics quoter’s)

As is well known, Marx writes that “the simplicity of the organization for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies.”² We are not concerned here with estimating the validity of this statement of Marx. Suffice it to bear in mind that according to Marx these various servants were *maintained at the expence of the whole community*; they were servants of the village.

Baden-Powell in his *The Indian Village Community* (1896) states about the rural servants in Indian villages as follows:

“But something else was wanted besides officers (headman, accountant, village-watchman, and so on—quoter) to make provision for the self-contained life of the ‘community’. A village group established perhaps in the forest at some distance from any other village, to say nothing of larger town, would need some purely local means of providing for the simple wants of daily life. And therefore villages of this (*raiyyatwari* type—quoter), and, naturally, of the joint type also, have always solved the difficulty by attracting to themselves a body of resident craftsmen and menials, who are not paid by the job, but *are employed by the village on a fixed remuneration*, sometimes of a bit of rent-free (and perhaps revenue-free—Baden-Powell) land, sometimes by small payments at harvest, as well as by customary allowances of so many sheaves of corn, millet, etc., or certain measures of grain, and perquisites in kind. Each is also given a housesite in the village, or in some cases, as in Madras, in a group outside it, forming a sort of suburb.”³ (italics quoter’s)

He further writes that the custom of paying the artisans and menials by allowances of grain often accompanied by a small grant of land was very ancient and found in every province, the grain allowance was taken out before the division of crop between the state and cultivators, and the villagers supplied the materials for the work to be done, but did not pay for the labour at the time of work.⁴

Then Max Weber in his *General Economic History* (1924) takes up the servants in Indian villages as the typical case of demiurgic mode of employment and states as follows on the basis of works by Baden-Powell and the decennial census:

“Here are settled craftsmen, temple priests, (which in contrast with the Brahmins play only a subordinate role—Max Weber), barbers, laundrymen, and all kind of laborers

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, transl. from the third German edition, by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, revised ed., vol. 1, Chicago, 1915, pp. 392–93.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 393–94.

³ B. H. Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community*, London, 1896 (rep. New Haven, 1957), pp. 16–17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17, footnote, 1.

belonging to the village—the village ‘establishment’. They hold on a ‘demiurgic’ basis; that is, they are not paid for their work in detail but stand at the service of the community in return for a share in the land or in the harvest”⁵ “They (hand workers—quoter) are attached to the village, subject to the disposal of anyone who has need of industrial service. They are essentially village serfs, receiving a share in the products or money payments. This we call ‘demiurgical’ labour”.⁶

Whereas Marx considered that ‘the economic self-sufficiency’ of Indian village containing a number of servants provided the key for explaining the ‘unchangeableness’ of Indian society, according to Max Weber the ‘stability’ of Indian society was based upon the caste system combined with ‘magical traditionalism’.⁷ In this way opinion differed between Marx and Weber regarding the historical role of the servants in Indian rural society and economy. Yet, both of them commonly regarded the servants as maintained by the *village* itself.

Now we shall turn to the Maharashtrian villages and show some representative opinions on the rural servants which broadly conform with the old theory.

S.N. Sen, historian of Marathas, writes in his *Administrative System of the Marathas* (1st ed. 1923; 2nd ed. 1925) about the ‘village community’ during the Maratha period on the basis of several contemporary Marathi documents as well as M. Elphinstone’s *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa* (1st ed. 1819):

“As it had its political autonomy, the Maratha village tried to have its industrial autonomy also; and this brought into existence the twelve *balutas* or the *village artisans*. The logical consequence of the idea and the ideal of industrial autonomy was that the artisans became watan-holders, and expected that they and their descendants should enjoy a monopoly of their particular trade in the village and their right to such a monopoly in theory as well as in practice was recognised by all.”⁸ “The *Balutas* or village artisans played an important part in Maratha village. They *enjoyed hereditary monopoly of their trade within the village*, and in the harvest time got a share of grains from *each cultivator*.”⁹ (italics quoter’s)

He defines the twelve *balutas* or *balutedars* as ‘Mahar, Sutar (carpenter), Lohar (blacksmith), Chambhar (leather-worker), Parit (washerman), Kumbhar (potter), Navi (barber), Mang (rope-maker), Kulkarni (village-accountant), Joshi (astrologer), Gurao (Hindu shrine-keeper), and Potdar (money-assayer)’, and states that they received a certain amount of grain called *baluta* at the harvest.¹⁰

Next, A.S. Altekar, historian of ancient India, wrote in 1927 on the basis of several ancient books as well as the District Gazetteers written by British administrators in the early 20th century to the effect that the system of servants in the Deccan villages had continued since ancient period. He states as follows:

⁵ Max Weber, *Abriss der universalen sozial-und Wirtschafts-Geschichte*, München und Leipzig, 1924, S. 37; *General Economic History*, transl. by Frank H. Knight, First Collier Book Edition, New York, 1961, pp. 34–35.

⁶ Max Weber, a.a.o., SS. 110–11; English transl., p. 97.

⁷ Max Weber, a.a.o., SS. 37, 148; English transl. pp. 128, 271 (note 5).

⁸ S.N. Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1925, p. 233.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

"All these (smith, carpenter, barber, shoe-maker, potter, washerman) and similar other artisans have been existing in villages from times immemorial, but they exist merely to serve the needs of the community. Hence it is that they are called 'servants of the community' . . . ; hence it is that their maintenance was guaranteed by the community; hence it is that they were not, and even now are not, accustomed to migrate from village to village in search of better employment."

"The peculiarity of the village occupations is that they are just what are required to make the village community self-contained and self-sufficient. . . ."

" . . . We find that all over Western India the village community possesses just as many professions as, and no more than what are required to serve the needs of its mainly agricultural population. . . . Let us now see how their members were remunerated for the services which they used to render to the village community. Usually the 'Balute' or the grain share system was followed, the origin and main features of which will now be discussed."

"Under this system a certain grain-share was paid every year by each farmer to all the village artisans at the time of the annual harvest. Payment was not made in cash but in kind; nor was this payment in kind made on each occasion the service was rendered, but annually at the harvest time. And finally we must note that *each farmer has to give a certain grain-share to each of the village servants whether he requires his services or not.*"¹¹ (italics quoter's)

And Altekar adds that the servants usually included in the twelve *balutas* were Chaugula (assistant village-headman), astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, Mahar (village-watchman) and Tarala (bearer of burdens and helper to travellers); and Mulani (Masjid-keeper) was also included in them in such a village as contained a large Muslim population.¹²

Though there is some difference in expression among the various opinions quoted above, they all agree that the servants in Indian village did serve and were employed by the territorial group called village or more often village community; they were servants of the village. On the other hand, as to whether they were *hereditarily* attached to the village, these opinions except S.N. Sen's are not very clear. But Baden-Powell uses the term 'resident', Max Weber 'settled', and Altekar almost negates their mobility: these three at least indicate the hereditary settlement of the servants in a specific village.

Against this demiurgic theory, the new theory here conveniently called jajmani theory asserts that the rural servants have been hereditarily employed by certain specific families. Incidentally the sociologists including anthropologists working in line of jajmani system usually do not care for the old demiurgic theory.

To begin with, W.H. Wiser, American Christian missionary, who stayed in a north Indian village for about five years from 1925 for his missionary activities, incidentally found there complicated economic relationships among villagers belonging to twenty-four castes, and examined them in great details. The result of the research was his *The Hindu Jajmani System* (1st ed. 1936) in which he writes as follows:

¹¹ A.S. Altekar, *A History of Village Communities in Western India*, Oxford University Press, 1927, pp. 89-90.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

"While in the village we heard for the first time the terms 'Jajman' and 'Jajmani Haqq'. Gradually we discovered that these terms referred to an established service relationship which was somewhat like the old feudal system, yet unlike it. It contained a mutuality that was lacking in the feudal system. . . ."¹³

"References to the term 'jajman' or 'ujman' as it is spelled in older literature, are found in court records usually in reference to the employer of a Brahman priest. . . . We have discovered in Karimpur, however, that the term 'jajman' is used for all who have the employer relationship. And the rights involved in the employer-employee relationship are popularly called 'Jajmani haqq'. Just how general this 'Jajmani' relationship is in villages of India we are not prepared to state. . . ."¹⁴

"In a Hindu village in North India each individual has a fixed economic and social status, established by his birth in any given caste. If he is born into a carpenter family, he finds himself related by blood to carpenters exclusively. . . . Each carpenter has his own clientele, which has become established through custom, and which continues from generation to generation. Where the village is large enough, the clientele will be limited by the the boundaries of the village. If the village is not large, or the members of carpenter families are too numerous to meet the needs of one village, the clientele extends to small neighbouring villages where there are no carpenters in residence. This relationship once established cannot be broken except by the carpenter himself who may choose to sell his right to another carpenter. It is heritable and sometimes transferable. . . ."¹⁵

"The carpenter calls his entire clientele his 'jajmani' or 'birt'—these terms being identical in meaning. *The individual family or head of the family whom the carpenter serves is called the carpenter's 'jajman'.* The 'jajman' speaks of the carpenter's family and all other families that serve him as his 'Kam-wale' or 'Kam karne-wale' (*i.e.* workers—Wiser), if they are of the serving castes, *i.e.*, Sudras or lower. . . ."¹⁶

"... Each has his own clientele comprising members of different castes which is his 'jajmani' or 'birt'. This system of interrelatedness in service within the Hindu community is called the Hindu 'Jajmani system.'¹⁷ (*italics quoter's*)

Unlike the scholars in line of demiurgic theory, for Wiser the village as a territorial group as such did not matter much. For him a village was not more than an inhabited area, which was disintegrated into various castes, economic relations among which and especially those among families belonging to which interested him; these relationships were hereditarily fixed between patron (jajman) and his servants and were transferable by the latter to their respective caste-fellows.

After being ignored for nearly two decades Wiser's work was discovered as it were by the sociologists on India after the Second World War when they developed a vigorous interest in the politico-economic relations in the 'little communities' of India, and a large number of works have been published in line of jajmani theory. Indeed, the term jajmani system has become one of the most important technical terms among sociologists on rural

¹³ W.H. Wiser, *The Hindu Jajmani System*, Lucknow, 1st pr., 1936, 2nd pr., 1958, p. vii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

India and been applied by them to the similar phenomena not only in north India but also all over India, though regional distribution and intensity of these works is not very fair, and only a few works have been done on the Deccan or Maharashtra and throw little light on the servants in the villages there;¹⁸ unfortunate condition for our present article.

At any rate T.O. Beidelman on the basis of a large number of post-War (or post-Independence) works on rural India has defined the jajmani system as follows: "The jajmani system is a feudalistic system of prescribed, hereditary obligations of payment and of occupational and ceremonial duties between two or more specific families of different castes in the same locality."¹⁹

Unlike many other sociologists who simply ignore the old theory on rural servants Beidelman states, "before Wiser the jajmani system had been mentioned in terms of 'village menials', 'village servants', 'village artisans', kamins, etc."²⁰ Similarly Oscar Lewis, too, writes, "it (the concept of jajmani system) provides us with a framework for a better understanding of much discrete data which earlier observers, such as Russel, Crooke, Baden-Powell, Ibbetson and Darling, described under the heading 'village menials', 'village servants', artisans, jajmans, kamins, etc."²¹ They simply take it for granted that the servants employed and maintained by the village community as described by the old theory were, in fact, servants of the specific families belonging to the dominant castes in the locality under the jajmani system.

To be sure there can be found many cases in north India as well as in the south that conform with the concept of jajmani system.²² But at the same time there are some other instances which deviate from it. For example, on a Mysore village M.N. Srinivas states, "But this tendency toward stability (of service relationship between patron and his servants) does not mean that continued unsatisfactory behavior on either side will be tolerated. After protesting to the village elders, the aggrieved party will break off the old relationship and form a new relationship with another. Shifting relationship may ultimately make one Smith or Potter more popular and therefore richer than others. Such shifting of relationship is also partly responsible for the rivalry which exists between members of the same non-agricultural caste in a village. . . ."²³ Here *hereditary* service relationship does not mean much.²⁴ Moreover not all the servants were employed by specific families. In the

¹⁸ Besides a few works on tribal people, the following may be mentioned: S.C. Dube, "A Deccan Village", in M.N. Srinivas ed., *India's Villages*, Government of West Bengal, 1955, pp. 180-91. H. Orenstein, "Leadership and Caste in a Bombay Village", in R.L. Park and I. Tinker ed., *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 415-26. G.S. Ghurye, *After a Century and a Quarter, Lonikand then and now*, Bombay, 1960. H. Orenstein, *Gaon; Conflict and Cohesion in an Indian Village*, Princeton University Press, 1965.

¹⁹ T.O. Beidelman, *A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System*, New York, 1959, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²¹ W.H. Wiser, *op. cit.*, p. xi (Foreword by Oscar Lewis).

²² For instance, Oscar Lewis, *Village Life in Northern India, Studies in a Delhi Village*, University of Illinois Press, 1958, chap. II, "Caste and Jajmani System". N.S. Reddy, "Functional Relations of Lohars in a North Indian Village," D.N. Majumdar ed., *Rural Profiles*, Luknow, 1955, pp. 1-12. M.N. Srinivas, "The Social System of a Mysore Village", McKim Marriot ed., *Village India*, The University of Chicago Press, 1955, p. 15.

²³ M.N. Srinivas, *ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁴ Cf. S.C. Dube, *Indian Village*, London, 1955, p. 59. "In this respect he (carpenter) would not make an exception even in the case of established cultivator to whose households his family may have been attached for *several years, even for decades.*" (brackets and italics quoter's)

same village, "of the thirty Untouchable families, fifteen are cultivators, and fifteen live by coolie work. Some of the cultivators are *cākaras*, or hereditary *village servants*, whose duty it is to assist the headman and accountant in the collection of land tax. . . ."²⁵ (italics of English words quoter's). Again on a north Indian village generally conforming to the concept of *jajmani* system Oscar Lewis states, "there were three other court cases between the Camars and Jats from 1930 to 1947. In one case the Jats asked the Camars to assign a man each day to keep a day watch to guard Jat harvest against animals and thieves. When the Camars refused, the Jats took the case to court. A compromise was reached in which the Camars agreed to a night watch rather than a day watch. The Camars interpreted this as a victory and they became more aggressive. . . ."²⁶ In this case both Jats and Chamars of the village behaved as a group to one another, and a night watch was agreed not between a Jat family and a Chamar family but between all the Jats as a group and all the Chamars as a group. Here the *jajmani* relation as a relation between specific families is not visible.

Though there are some sociologists who try to modify or more delimit the concept of *jajmani* system,²⁷ it is yet treated as one of the major frameworks for research among the modern sociologists on rural India.

Thus we have shown two kinds of theory on the mode of employment of Indian rural servants. One point to be noticed on the old theory is that it is not always backed by any empirical evidences. What it is based on is mostly writings by British administrators, who may simply have taken the servants of specific families for the servants of the village. On the other hand works of modern sociologists usually have not much historical perspective. They tend to regard the phenomena which seem old at the time of field work as *traditional* with the implication that they have continued as if since the time immemorial. The 'traditional' systems and institutions, however, may have been historically developed in the unexpectedly recent past.

In this article I will try to examine as concretely as possible the modes of employment of the servants in the 18th century Maharashtrian villages on the basis of about thirty contemporary records written in Marathi. The topics to be discussed are firstly about those servants who are collectively called twelve *balutas* in our records; were they servants of the village or of specific families in the village, was the sphere of their service hereditary (and transferable) or temporary, how were they paid, and how was their service-sphere divided when necessary? Secondly we will take up the mode of employment of priests as representing the typically *jajmani* system.

Due to the paucity of materials my work cannot but be tentative and static.

II. *The Twelve Baluta-Servants (Bara Balute)*

Various servants in Maharashtrian villages have been often classified into two categories: 'twelve *balutas*' and 'twelve *alutas*'. A few words of explanation may be necessary

²⁵ M.N. Srinivas, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²⁶ Oscar Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²⁷ David F. Pocock, "Notes on *jajmani* relationships", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, No. VI, December 1962, pp. 79 ff.

regarding these two categories of rural servants. First, there is some difference in explanation regarding components of twelve among the modern scholars. As mentioned before, S.N. Sen enumerates as twelve *balutas* carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, village-accountant, astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, money-assayer, and Mahar (untouchable caste of village watchman and other menial works). Of them money-assaying used to be done by goldsmith (Sonar) so that money-assayer could be put as goldsmith. On the other hand A.S. Altekar removes village-accountant from the twelve *balutas* and adds to them assistant village-headman, Masjid-keeper, and Tarala (bearer of burdens and helper to travellers) as mentioned before. Again H.H. Wilson states that village-headman, village-accountant and assistant village-headman are usually not included in the *balutas* and quotes the opinion of J. Grant-Duff which excludes village-accountant and money-assayer (or goldsmith) from and adds bard (Bhatt) and Masjid-keeper²⁸ to the list of twelve *balutas* shown by S.N. Sen above. Against this the twelve *balutas* as shown in a record of 1799 from Saswad region include goldsmith in the place of bard.²⁹ In short those who were almost regularly included in twelve *balutas* were carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, and Mahar. In addition to above ten, goldsmith, bard, Masjid-keeper and bearer of burdens were often included in the *balutas*.

Second, list of 'twelve *alutas*' is also slightly different among scholars. For instance, J. Grant-Duff includes in them goldsmith, Lingayat priest (Jangam), tailor (Shimpi), water-carrier (Koli), bearer of burdens (Tarala), gardener (Mali), drum-beater (Dauryagosavi), vocalist (Ghadshi), musician (Gondali), watchman (Ramoshi or Bhil), oil-presser (Teli), and betel leaves-seller (Tamboli).³⁰ Against this H.H. Wilson's list includes bard in the place of goldsmith.³¹ In other words goldsmith, bard and bearer of burdens were sometimes included in the twelve *balutas* as mentioned before and sometimes in the twelve *alutas*.

Third, whereas the terms '*balutas*' and 'twelve *balutas*' are frequently found in the 18th century Marathi records, terms '*alutas*' and 'twelve *alutas*' are not found in them to the best of my knowledge. The names of individual occupations shown above as to be included in *alutas* are mentioned in them. This may mean that the terms *alutas* and twelve *alutas* were scarcely used in Maharashtra during the pre-British period. At any rate it is said that the term *aluta* was formed alliteratively from *baluta* in extension of the application of that word,³² and unlike *balutas* the *alutas* were not regularly found in every village but were only occasionally seen in some villages;³³ they were much less indispensable than the *balutas* for the daily life of the villagers. This is also indicated by the fact that scholars like S.N. Sen and A.S. Altekar make no mention of *alutas*. Accordingly they shall be excluded from the discussion in this article.

And fourth, a few words about the caste of *balutas*. Of them astrologer and bard were as a rule Brahmins by caste. And village-accountant, whether regarded as a *baluta*

²⁸ H.H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms... of British India*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1940, p. 83. J. Grant-Duff, *A History of the Mahrattas*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1912, p. 24, footnote.

²⁹ R.V. Oturkar ed., *Peshvekālin Sāmājik va Ārthik Patravavyavahār*, Poona, 1950, no. 75. (abbreviated as Oturkar in the following footnotes)

³⁰ J. Grant-Duff, *op. cit.*, p. 25, footnote.

³¹ H.H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

³² J.T. Molesworth, *Dictionary, Marathi and English*, 2nd ed., Bombay, 1857, p. 46.

³³ H.H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 30 (left).

or not, was also a Brahmin in Maharashtra. Therefore a Brahmin family sometimes performed these different functions. Also, carpenter and blacksmith were of two different castes, but in some villages a carpenter of the carpenter caste was engaged in blacksmithery, and *vice versa*.³⁴ Except for such cases the *balutas* as a rule belonged to different occupational castes.

1. *Watan*-holding *Balutas* and Stranger (*Upari*) *Balutas*

The idea that each rural servant had hereditary monopoly of work in the sphere of his service is widely prevalent among the scholars. Of the scholars in line of demiurgic theory S.N. Sen expressly states so, and Baden-Powell, Max Weber, and A.S. Altekar also suggest the same. Many of the modern sociologists also take it for granted as it were. R.V. Oturkar also once stated, "one would be led to think that any conceivable profession under the sun could possibly be crystallised into a *Watan*, so deep was the idea rooted in the mentality of the people (during the 18th century)."³⁵

But such an idea is not correct as far as the *baluta*-servants in the 18th century Maharashtra were concerned. There was a clear distinction between *watandār* (or *mirās-dār*) *balutas* and *upari balutas*. As are well known both the words of *watan* and *mirās* are of the Arabic origin; the former ordinarily means 'native country' or 'home', and the latter 'patrimony' or 'inheritance'. These two words are used in our records interchangeably, so that we shall use only *watan* for convenience. On the other hand *upari* is an indigenous word used in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi and means 'new comer', 'stranger' or 'extra'.³⁶ Regarding this distinction we shall show some instances.

A very lengthy record of the year 1765 shows detailed process and result of a dispute over the goldsmithery *watan* (*sonār-kiche watan*) of a village named Lonikhurd of Sangamner region about 130 kilometres north-north east of Poona between Lakshman, goldsmith of Village Lonibudruk and Village Hasanapur, and Sadashiv, goldsmith of Village Lonikhurd. The story goes as follows. Goldsmith Lakshman asserted that when the Village Loni was divided into three villages mentioned above, his ancestors held the *watan* of goldsmithery in these villages, but after his great grandfather died the great grandmother was remarried to a goldsmith residing in other village taking a small boy (Lakshman's grandfather) with her, and entrusting the goldsmithery of three villages to a relative; after some time Sadashiv's grandfather migrated into Village Lonikhurd and started the goldsmithery there; the relative who had been entrusted with the work informed the matter to Lakshman's grandfather who accordingly sent back Lakshman's father and uncle to their ancestral villages; the father and uncle settled down in Village Lonibudruk and started the goldsmithery in Village Lonibudruk and Village Hasanapur, and demanded Sadashiv's grandfather and father to restore the *watan* of goldsmithery at Village Lonikhurd to them, which demand Sadashiv's ancestors refused by saying that the goldsmithery *watan* had been theirs though the document given by the villagers to that effect had been lost in an accident. The case was appealed

³⁴ G.C. Vad prep., *Selections from the Satara Raja's and the Peshwa's Diaries*, published by the Deccan Vernacular Translation Society, Poona, with the Permission of the Government of Bombay, 9 vols., Poona, 1906-11 (abbreviated as *SSRPD*), vol. VII, no. 532. Oturkar, no. 37.

³⁵ R.V. Oturkar, "Some Aspects of Social Life under Maratha Rule", in *Historical and Economic Studies*, Fergusson College, Poona, 1943, p. 26.

³⁶ H.H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 853 (*upari*).

to the local governor who summoned both the disputants, as well as village officers and *balutas* of the three villages as witnesses before him. All the witnesses submitted the statement one after another to the effect that goldsmithery *watan* of Village Lonikhurd was Lakshman's while Sadashiv and his ancestors were 'new strangers' (*navā uparī*) although they worked in the village for three generations as goldsmith and enjoyed the goldsmith's remuneration (*sonārkiṇeṅ baluteṅ*) during the period. On the basis of these evidences, Sadashiv admitted his defeat, gave his Defeat Letter (*yajitpatra*) to Lakshman in front of the governor and left the village with his family.³⁷

This clear distinction of status between the *watan*-holder and the stranger within a rural service was applicable to all kinds of rural services. For instance a lengthy record of the year 1763 shows a dispute over the *watan* of blacksmithery of a village named Koradh in the Junnar province. There resided several families of carpenters related to one another and a family of blacksmith. The carpenters claimed that not only carpentry *watan* but also blacksmithery *watan* of the village properly belonged to them, and appealed the case to the local governor. The governor summoned both the disputants and twenty-five villagers including headman. In the justice assembly the plaintiffs (carpenters) asserted that the blacksmithery *watan* of the village being theirs a member of them had been engaged in blacksmithery; but this 'carpenter blacksmith' (Sutar *lohar*) was one day summoned to the local office, beaten and fined because he had lost an ax entrusted by a villager for repair who, then, appealed to the local officer; the 'carpenter blacksmith' got angry and disappointed, gave up the blacksmithery and shifted to a nearby town; the villagers (*gāṇvakarī*) went to the town once or twice to tell him to come back but he did not do so telling that he had lost his face; then the villagers brought a blacksmith (defendant) from other village and got him to do the blacksmithery of the village, whom the carpenters were opposed to, and the villagers also told the carpenters to pay him some money for he had worked there for some time, and do the blacksmithery themselves; but the blacksmith did not agree with the proposal.³⁸ Against this assertion the defendant stated that the blacksmithery *watan* of the village had belonged to his family till his grandfather's time, but his father in infancy left the village due to a famine and settled down in other village where the defendant was later born; after his father's death when he was fifteen years old, the officers (*kārbhārī*) of the Koradh Village came to know his whereabouts and took him back to the village saying that he was the *watandar*; and since then he was being engaged in the blacksmithery of the village, hence *watan* was his.³⁹ Now the statements made by twenty-five villagers were divided into two. One party comprising fifteen confirmed the assertion of the plaintiffs and stated that as the 'carpenter blacksmith' who had shifted to the town did not return to the village, "headman and other officers of the village brought a stranger blacksmith named Satva (Satva *Loher uparī*, defendant) from other village... and got him to do the blacksmithery.... Since then he has been doing the blacksmithery and getting the *balute*-remuneration. He also stamps the seal of blacksmith upon the documents when they are prepared in the storehouse in the village. But this blacksmith is not the *watandar*; neither his grandfather nor his father lived in the village. Nor was he brought to the village as *watandar*.... Blacksmith Satva has no *watan's* house (*watanāchā vādā*)

³⁷ SSRPD, vol. VII, no. 546, pp. 151-63, especially pp. 159-62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, no. 532, pp. 134-35 (left).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35 (right).

in the village; he lives in the house of goldsmith.”⁴⁰ The other party of ten villagers, on the other hand, stated that they did not know who had been the original blacksmith of the village, whether Blacksmith Satva was *watandar* or whether the blacksmithery of the village belonged to carpenters, and “so far as we see, Blacksmith Satva is doing blacksmithery and carpenters carpentry. The blacksmith receives the *baluta*-remuneration for blacksmithery, and Blacksmith Satva stamps the seal upon the documents as blacksmith, and carpenters the seal of carpentry.” They further stated that they did not know whether Satva was brought to the village ‘as *watandar* or *watanless* (*gairvatani*).’⁴¹ As the statements were divided in this way the local governor refrained from giving decision and entrusted the matter upon a *panchayat* composed of the hereditary officers (*Deshmukh* and *Deshpande*) of the region as well as headmen of nearby villages. The *panchayat* considered the above statements given by villagers and decided, “there is no evidence in the statements to show that Blacksmith Satva is *watandar* blacksmith, nor is the evidence available to prove his father, grandfather and great grandfather (having been in the village). . . . He has simply practised (the blacksmithery) as a stranger (*uparipana*). He has received the *baluta*-remuneration by doing blacksmithery, and it is because of this that he stamps the seal (of blacksmithery) upon documents This blacksmith has enjoyed (the blacksmithery) only for thirty or thirty-two years. He has nothing to do with the *watan*. On the other hand it is proved that carpenters’ uncle (carpenter blacksmith), grandfather and great grandfather lived (in the village) for three generations. And some of the villagers (*pāṇḍhari*) state that the blacksmith who left the village in disappointment was a carpenter (by caste). Then the carpenters (plaintiffs) have arrived at the blacksmithery *watan*”⁴² Thus the plaintiffs won the case, and the defendant admitted his defeat and wrote a document to that effect to the former.⁴³

As was mentioned before in this article carpentry and blacksmithery were performed sometimes by the same family. At any rate in this case, too, there can be observed a clear distinction between one who held a certain sphere of service as his *watan* (patrimony) and one who held no *watan* (*gairvatani*) or *upari*.

Similarly when there was no hereditary accountant (*Kulkarni*) in a village in *Paithan* region headmen of the village jointly sold for Rs. 150 the *watan* of accountancy of the village and a housesite to an accountant-cum-astrologer of a nearby village and gave him a *miraspatra* in which it is stated, “there was no old *watandar* accountant in our village. A stranger (*upari*) came and did the work (of accountant).”⁴⁴ Again, when two barbers disputed over the *watan* of hairdressing in a village in *Navase* region, one of the disputants stated in the justice assembly, “Headmen of the village appointed my grandfather to the work of the village. Since then we have been doing. But that is not our *watan*. ”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–38 (left). “*gānvache pātil vagaire kārbhāri yāññiñ Mauje Kalanb Tarf Mahaluñge yethēñ Satvā Lohār uparī rāhat hotā, tyās ānūñ lohārkicheñ kām chālētēñ, tyājvar varsheñ dohovarsheñ Kilijkhānāchī dhāmdūñ jāhālī tevhānpāsūñ lohārkicheñ kāmākāj toch karito va baluteñ gheho. gānvāñt kotheñ kāgad patrahi jāhaleñ, tyāñjvarhi tyāneñ sākshī lohār mhañon ghātlyā, parañtu hā lohār vatandār nāñhīñ. yāchā ājā pañjā gānvāvar nāñdlā nāñhīñ va yās vatandār mhañon gānvāvar āñilā nāñhīñ.*”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–37 (right).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 138–39.

⁴⁴ V.K. Rajvade ed., *Marāthyāñchā Itihāsāchīñ Sādhanēñ*, vol. 14, Poona, 1918, no. 1. “*āple gānvīñ purātan vatandār kulkarnī navtā uparī yeññu kām chālvt hotā.*” This record is of the year 1681.

⁴⁵ *SSRPD*, vol. II no. 16. “*āple ājās gānvacheñ kāmākāj chālāvayās thevleñ hoteñ; tyāpāsūñ āpñā chālvtōñ parañtu āpleñ vatan navhe.*”

In short not all the *baluta*-servants held the hereditary exclusive monopoly over the sphere of the service. There was a distinction between those who held it (*watandar*) and those who did not (*upari*). Then were they employed by the village itself as a territorial whole or by a certain specific families separately? We shall begin with the examination of the extent of the sphere of their service and proceed to the mode of their remuneration.

2. Service-sphere of the *Baluta*-Servants

Of the records I have consulted there is none which indicates that the *baluta*-servants in the Maharashtrian villages were employed by certain specific families in the village. Rather all of them show that they were servants of the village as a whole. In the record on the goldsmithery *watan* referred to above, the presiding local governor, the disputants, and the witnesses all often utter such phrases as 'goldsmithery of the village' (*gāñvachī sonārki*), 'work of goldsmithery of the village' (*gāñvachī sonārkičēñ kāmāj*), 'service to the village' (*gāñvachī chākri*), 'work for the village' (*dehāyachēñ kāmāj*, *gāñvache kāmāj*), 'watan of the village' (*gāñvachēñ watan*), and 'goldsmithery watan of the village' (*dehāimajkūrcheñ sonārkičēñ watan*).⁴⁶ A village headman states that when Goldsmith Shidu by name came from village Vadejavhan, "all the villagers (*gāñvakari samasti*) appointed him to the work of the village."⁴⁷ To be sure the headman of Lonibudruk Village uses the phrase of 'our goldsmith' (*āple Sonār*),⁴⁸ and the headman of Hasanapur Village also says, "it is true that Goldsmith Lakshman is our old *mirasdar* brother bound through *watan*" (Lakshman Sonār *āplā purātan mirāsdār watan bhāu khare āhe*).⁴⁹ But this does not mean that the goldsmith was specifically employed by the families of headmen. Headmen state so in their capacity of the representatives of their villages, for the latter headman immediately states that "he was made to do the work of goldsmithery of our village",⁵⁰ and the former also says of 'work of *watan* of goldsmithery of the village'.⁵¹

In the record on the dispute over blacksmithery of a village referred to above, too, such phrases are often used as 'watan of blacksmithery of the above village' (*mauje majkūrcheñ lohārkičēñ watan*),⁵² and 'watans of carpentry and blacksmithery of the above village' (*mauje majkūrcheñ sutārkičēñ va lohārkičēñ watan*).⁵³ And as the disputants agreed to "behave according to what the villagers will say, if (the local governor) collects all the villagers (*samakul pāndhar*) and asks them by putting the symbol of truth (*belbhandar*, namely leaves of Bel-tree and turmeric powder that are on a deity) upon their forehead,"⁵⁴ the governor "collected the villagers (*pāndhar*), . . . summoned one by one separately and asked him to state the evidence on the *watan* of blacksmithery",⁵⁵ Though the term 'all villagers' should not be understood literally, for the persons collected were only twenty-five in number

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, no. 546, pp. 151-57, 159-62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160 (right). "Shidu Sonār Vāḍegavhāñihūñ ālā. tyāñs gāñvakari samastāññiñ gāñvache kāmās thevilā."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159 (left).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160 (left).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160 (left). "āmche gāñvachehi sonārkičēñ kāmāj karāvyaśi lāgle."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159 (left). "gāñvachī sonārkičēñ watan kāmāj."

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. VII, no. 532, pp. 133, 134 (left), 139.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 134 (left).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

comprising headmen, peasants and various servants,⁵⁶ yet there is no doubt that people concerned were very conscious of the fact that carpenter and blacksmith were 'of the village,' and therefore the dispute over their service-sphere was to be decided by the evidences of all the villagers.

When another dispute took place over the *watan* of blacksmithery of other village (*mauje majkürche lohärpanāchyā vatan*) between a carpenter and a blacksmith of the village, 'all the villagers, landholders, and twelve *balutas*' were collected in front of the village-shrine and made to state their evidences. Here only twenty-one persons were collected, yet as 'the blacksmith of the village' was concerned so that 'all the villagers' were to decide the dispute.⁵⁷ Regarding a barber, too, '*watan* of hairdressing of the above village' (*mauje majkürche nhāvīpanāche vatan*), and 'work for the village' (*gānvacheñ kām, gānvacheñ kāmkañj*) are mentioned in a record on a village in Navase region.⁵⁸

Regarding the untouchables such as Mahars and Mangs (rope-makers) the following examples may be quoted. In 1738 Deshmukh and Deshpande of Lalagun Buddh Panchgau region enquired into the duties and remunerations of the Mahars *vis-à-vis* village-headmen in their region and reported the result to their counterparts of Saswad region. This report contains seventeen items details of which will be shown later in connection with the modes of remuneration for *baluta*-servants. The first item is: "Mahārs should work for twenty-four hours (per month ?) during twelve months in order to deepen the reservoir (of the village)". And the second item is: "In case there are other Mahārs they should do the service for the village in accordance with the order of the village-headman."⁵⁹ In a record concerning a dispute over the remuneration between Mahars and Mangs in Garad Village near Poona in 1810 (to be referred to later in details), a Mahar states, "then Māngs appealed to villagers (*pāñdhari*). Accordingly villagers summoned me and said..."⁶⁰

The examples shown above suggest that sphere of service of the *baluta*-servants was not a certain specific families but the village conceived as a territorial whole.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the village in the 18th century Maharashtra was nothing like an agrarian commune based on the common ownership of land and other property among the peasants. There was a class division so to say among them between *mirāsdaars* (landholders) and *uparis* (stranger peasants or tenants), and the peasants (along with servants) lived on the inhabited area (*pāñdhari*) of the village on the basis of individual families, and their daily life of production and consumption was carried on on the basis of family.⁶¹ Accordingly each *baluta*-servant served individual families in the village. For instance in the dispute over blacksmithery between carpenters and blacksmith referred to above, the following is stated, "Carpenter Kashi, uncle of Darkoji, was engaged in blacksmithery. Sabaji Kuchila of the above village placed his ax with Kasi for repair, which

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁷ Oturkar, no. 37.

⁵⁸ *SSRPD*, vol. II, no. 16.

⁵⁹ Oturkar, no. 46. "Mahār bādhaḷe kholechā bārāmāhi ashtoprahara rābtā asāvā." "Varkad Mahār astil tyās pātīlāche hukūmāpramāneñ ubhī pāñdharīchī chākri karāvi."

⁶⁰ Oturkar, no. 77 (nakal). "tevhā pāñdharikaḍe Māg firyād gelā tyāvarūn pādharine majlā bolāūn sāgitle."

⁶¹ Hiroshi Fukazawa, "Lands and Peasants in the Eighteenth Century Marāthā Kingdom", *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, vol. 6 no. 1, June 1965, pp. 49 ff.

disappeared from him.”⁶² In this record it is not clear whether the man surnamed Kuchila was a peasant or an artisan. At any rate it shows that it was individual villagers living in different families who enjoyed the service of the *baluta* blacksmith. But, at the same time, this blacksmith was not specifically employed by the Kuchila family, for when he lost the ax of Kuchila, was complained of by the latter to local governor, was beaten and fined by this, got angry and disappointed, and shifted to a nearby town, “villagers (*gāñvakarī*) once or twice went to the town to persuade him (to come back). But he did not return to the village saying that he had lost his face. Then villagers (*gāñvakarī*) brought another blacksmith . . . and got him to work the blacksmithery.”⁶³ In other words those who went to the town to bring back the blacksmith or brought another from somewhere else were not the Kuchilas but the villagers conceived as an aggregate. In short the sphere of service of the *baluta*-servant was a village as a territorial group. He offered his service to individual villagers belonging to the village irrespective of their family affiliation.

In order to ascertain this point further we shall examine next the kinds and modes of remuneration for the *baluta*-servants.

3. Remuneration for *Baluta*-Servants

There seem to have been broadly three kinds of remuneration for *baluta*-servants. One was the remuneration in kind or in cash called *baluta* which we shall here designate as *baluta*-remuneration; the second was additional minor remunerations in kind or in cash variously called *hakk* (rights), *lavājima* (perquisites) or *mānpān* (privileges) which we shall categorize as perquisites; and the third was revenue-free *inām* land which was often held by some of the *baluta*-servants. We will begin with the *baluta*-remuneration.

Not only *watan*-holding servants but also strangers were entitled to the *baluta*-remuneration so long as they offered specific service to the village. This is clear from the fact that Goldsmith Sadashiv, finally judged to be an *uparī* in the dispute over goldsmithery as referred to above, is repeatedly stated to have received *baluta*-remuneration for goldsmithery by doing the work of the village. In another dispute over the blacksmithery referred to above, also, village-headmen and villagers state about Blacksmith Satva, finally judged to be an *uparī*, as follows: “. . . since then, he has been doing the work of blacksmithery and getting the *baluta*-remuneration. . . . This blacksmith is, however, not *watan*-holder.”⁶⁴ And “so far as we see, Blacksmith Satva is doing blacksmithery, and carpenters carpentry. *Baluta*-remuneration for blacksmithery is received by the blacksmith.”⁶⁵

On the other hand it seems that even the *watan*-holding servant was not entitled to *baluta*-remuneration if he was absent from the village for a long period of time, for, in the above two examples, neither the *watan*-holding goldsmith nor the carpenters holding the *watan* of blacksmithery demanded the *baluta*-remuneration for the period of their absence.

⁶² SSRPD, vol. VII, no. 532, p. 134 (left). “*darmyān Darkojichā chultā Kāshī Sutār lohārki karit hotā. te veles Sābāji Kuchilā Mauje majkūr yānniñ Kāshī javal āplī kurhād ghaḍāvyāsi dīlī hotī te tyajpāsūn gahāl jāhlī. . .*”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 134 (left). “*tyāvar ek don velān tyāche samajāvisīs gāñvakarī āle parañtu āplī abrū geli hmanon to gāñvavar gelā nāhin. mag gāñvakarī yānniñ. . .*”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, no. 532. “*tevhāpāsūn lohārkiñche kāmkañ toj karito va baluteñ ghetō. . . parañtu hā lohār vatandār nāhin. . .*”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Moreover, there is a record showing the remuneration for twelve *baluta*-servants in cash in a village of Saswad region, which after showing the total amount at Rs. 70 states, "Mahars are not serving on their *watan*. Therefore deduct Rs. 10 (amount due to Mahars.) The rest is Rs. 60."⁶⁶

Now there seem to have been at least three different modes of paying *baluta*-remuneration which may have corresponded to three different methods of collecting land revenue by the state.

The first mode corresponds to the *batāi* system of revenue collection in which a certain proportion of the agricultural products of the village was collected in kind. A record of 1774 recollects the state of affairs of Junnar region under the Mughal rule perhaps in the 17th century and states, "formerly when the *batāi* system of the village was practiced under the Mughal rule, the whole products of the village were collected in one place, and after weighing the products by the hands of weigher, *baluta*-remuneration was paid."⁶⁷ In other words, the headman, responsible for the collection of revenue, made each peasant bring his products to a certain place in the village, and let him pay certain amount of them to each *baluta*-servant, and then fixed proportion of the rest was collected as revenue.

The second mode may correspond to the method of revenue collection where the amount of revenue from each peasant family was prefixed in kind or in cash, and peasants were not required to bring all the produce to one place. In a record from Saswad region supposed to have been written before 1746, a village-headman complains to the Deshpande of the region of misbehaviour committed by the accountant-astrologer of his village as follows:

"*Baluta*-remuneration for astrologer used to be paid after (headman) inspected the peasants (*kula*) and fields, and according to the state of crops. He (astrologer) also used to receive (it). At present, however, Kusajipant (astrologer) not only usurps the cotton-cloth for marriage go-between (due to the barber ?) by force, but also sends his female slave and ruffians (? *rangadya*) along with a horse to each field for *baluta*-remuneration, and the female slave makes bundles of produce as she pleases, gets the peasants (*setkari*) to pile them up on the horse, and carries it back (to the house of the astrologer). . . . When I went to reprimand Kusajupant on this matter, he came out with a stick to beat me. (He) has begun to behave rudely in these ways. He is the astrologer-accountant and I am the headman. How could I endure his rudeness ? . . . Land of 5 *partanes* (perhaps 20 to 25 *bighas*) was going on (with the astrologer-accountant) as Brahmin land (*brahmanatike*) since before. Now, however, (he) is eating 10 *partanes* by force: (he) has taken other 5 *partanes* out of the land of peasants (*kunbi*), who are forced to labour (*shrāmi*) (by him)."⁶⁸

In this instance the correspondence with revenue system is not clearly stated. At any rate this record shows that the normal procedure in this village was for the headman to inspect the state of the crops perhaps at each harvest and to get each peasant to pay a part of the produce to each *baluta*-servant.

The third mode was to pay a certain amount of money to *baluta*-servants. For instance a record of 1799 from Saswad region states as follows:

⁶⁶ Oturkar, no. 75. "*paikī vajā mähār vatanāvar chākrīs nāhīnt sabab rupye 10 bākī rupye 60.*"

⁶⁷ SSRPD, vol. VI, no. 710. "*peshjīh Moglāi amālānt gānvachī batāi hot hotī, tevhan säre gānvachā māl ekjāgeñ jamā hoūn, āutakyāche hāteñ mālāchī mojñi hoūn, baluteñ pāvāt hoteñ.*"

⁶⁸ Oturkar, no. 90. "*balute josi yāche deñeñ te kūl pāhūn set pāhūn pikāsārikhe det āloñ tehi ghet āle . . .*"

“Year 1200 in Shuhur era (1799 A.D.) Details of the remuneration for *baluta*-servants per year in rupee.

1st class (<i>kās thorli</i>)		2nd class (<i>kās madhil</i>)		3rd class (<i>dhākti kās</i>)		
carpenter	10	potter	5	astrologer	2.5	
leather-worker	10	barber	5	shrine-keeper	2.5	
rope-maker	10	washerman	5	goldsmith	2.5	
Mahār	10	blacksmith	5	Masjid-keeper	2.5	
Total	40	Total	20	Total	10	Grand total 70

Of them Mahārs are not serving on their *watan*. Therefore deduct Rs. 10. The rest is Rs. 60.”⁶⁹

The above record does not show the name of the village. Nor is it clear whether the sum was borne by each peasant family or by whole peasant families. The latter may be more plausible. At any rate the above record indicates that *baluta*-remuneration was sometimes paid in cash perhaps when the revenue of the village as a whole was fixed at a certain amount of money.

In short there is hardly any doubt that there were at least three modes of *baluta*-remuneration, and that it was borne by peasants as a whole.

The second kind of payment is called here perquisites, and the third is small plot of *inām* land. Some examples of these payments will be shown below.

In a record of 1740 an astrologer of Khed region is stated to have held the following two rights (*hakk*) in addition to ‘*baluta*-remuneration equal to that of Hindu shrine-keeper (*balute gurāvābarobar*)’: 1. A share of the offerings to village-shrine equal to other *baluta*-servants (*devali prasād bhar baluti-yābarobar*); 2. *Inām* land of 25 *bighas* (about 8 hectares) producing the grain of 12.5 *mans* (probably about 157 kilograms).⁷⁰

As already referred to the Deshmukh and the Deshpande of Lalagun Buddh Panchgau region enquired into the following seventeen items of rights and duties of the village-headman and the Mahars in the year 1738.

1. Mahars should work for twenty-four hours (per month ?) during twelve months in order to deepen the reservoir (of the village).
1. In case there are other Mahars they should do the service for the village in accordance with the order of the village-headman.

Items (of remunerations) for Mahars are to go on as follows:

1. They should eat *harāti* land (a kind of *inām* land) and do the miscellaneous works for village-headman.
1. They should eat *Mahārik* land (a kind of *inām* land), and do the miscellaneous works for government.
1. Headman (*mhetare*) of Mahars should take the *baluta*-remuneration (*baite=balute*)⁷¹ for useless fellows (? *gandu gudadya*). Excepting eight Mahars the rest is his. (The meaning of this item is not clear.)
1. Grains left in the threshing ground.

⁶⁹ Oturkar, no. 75.

⁷⁰ SSRPD, vol. I, no. 283, p. 137.

⁷¹ Vide J.T. Molesworth, *Dictionary, Marathi and English*, 2nd ed., Bombay, 1857, p. 565 (*bayate*).

1. *Baluta*-remuneration for Mahars.
1. People say that Mahars hold fifty-two rights besides those shown above.

Total six items

1. Besides the above items, if there are fallen trees (*padjhad*) in the residential area of the village, they are Mahars'.
1. Village-headman should give a cloth to messenger Mahar (*lābechā mahār*) when (the latter) wishes.
1. Mahār should offer a bundle of firewood (to village-headman) on each festival day (*sana*), and then ask for food.
1. (Mahārs) should remove the skin of (dead) cattle of the headman's, accountant's and assistant headman's families, and submit it to its respective owner. Besides, the skin of the plough ox of important families of the village (*pandharichī khot matkhasar kulavāvādā*) should be submitted to its owner.
1. Headman responsible for the cultivation (? *nangare patil*) should take the meat of the female buffalo-calf dedicated on the festival of goddess Lakshmi.
1. On the Holi festival of village (*gāñviche Holi*) (the headman) should give to Mahars a half of coconut-shell, betel-leaves (*pānsupārī*) and cigars in order to make Mahars bring the fire for Holi.
1. Offerings called *naivedya* at the Holi of the village should be taken by the water-carrier (Koli) and vocalist (Ghadshi), and Mahār should receive in the open hands as much as the water-carrier may give.
1. When merchant family (*vāniyāche birād*) throw copper coins (? *votal dām*) on the ground they should be given to him (Mahār). (Meaning is not clear.)
1. Headman should take 4 *rukas* (small amount of money) from each family (? *dar birādās*), and watchman Mahar (*Māhār rākhañ*) 2 *rukas* from each family (? *dar birādās*); total 6 *rukas*. (Meaning is not very clear.)⁷²

Again in Village Pargao near Poona there was a custom that headman should give to the leather-workers of the village five items (details not shown) out of the offerings (*naivedya*) dedicated to the village-shrine at the Holi festival.⁷³

In a record of 1776 Mahars of villages in Parner region to the west of Ahmadnagar are stated to have enjoyed the following rights (*hakk*):

1. When oxen and cattle in general die in the village Mahars should have their skin excepting plough oxen.
1. On the Dasahara festival, while rope-makers receive a bowl of food from each family (*gharoghar*) (in the village), Mahars are entitled to five kinds of offerings (*panch naivedya*) (dedicated to village-shrine) as well as five *pais* of cash.
1. Ox offered to god (*polyāche bailāchā naivedya*) (on festivals) is given to Mahars.
1. When cattle is dead in the house of rope-makers it is also given to Mahars.
1. On the Dasahara festival, the pot of sweets (*pedhyāchi ghāgar*) hung from the neck of

⁷² Oturkar, no. 46.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, no. 70.

a male buffalo going round the village should be given to Mahars along with the male buffalo.

1. Offerings dedicated to village-shrine in order to avoid the cholera epidemics are given to Mahars.⁷⁴

In short, whereas the *baluta*-remuneration was paid by the peasants in kind or sometimes in cash, the perquisites variously called *hakk*, *manpan* and so on were given to servants by all the villagers including not only peasants but also village officers, merchants and village servants in the form of offerings to village-shrine or on other various occasions and under various pretexts. And there were complicated customary rules in the village and region as to which servant was to receive what kind of perquisites, how much, when and where.

It is, however, not clear due to the paucity of data whether an *upari* servant who did not hold his service-sphere as *watan* but worked in the village for an uncertain period of time enjoyed the same perquisites as a *watan*-holding servant so long as he served in the village, or there was any discrimination between the both in this regard.

On the other hand, as *inām* land was hereditarily enjoyed in principle,⁷⁵ it may be safely presumed that only *watan*-holding *baluta*-servants could have such an *inām* land.

At any rate it may be thus concluded that the twelve *baluta*-servants were maintained and supported by the village as a territorial whole.

Then the question that may immediately occur in mind is: Is it not the case that only so long as one family of each serving caste resided in the village, he was treated as 'servant of the village', but when several families of the same serving caste took place in the village, they may have divided the villagers among themselves, and thus each of them turned to become 'servant of families' only serving certain specific families in the village? In order to answer this question, we shall next turn to the mode of dividing the *watan* of *baluta*-servants.

4. Division, Transfer and Sale of *Baluta-Watan*

The *baluta-watan* was heritable or hereditary on the patrilineal line as pointed out in several examples above. Moreover the *watan* could be divided, transferred or sold by its holder. Regarding the sale, an example is shown in the following statement made by Goldsmith Sadashiv when he stated before the justice-assembly presided over by the local governor: "Goldsmith Lakshman told me, 'as I will give you Rs. 200, give me the *watan*'."⁷⁶ This means that the sale of *watan* among the same professional group (caste) was by no means extraordinary.

However, the record showing the details of the mode of division, transfer and sale of *watan* is rather rare. Yet there is a *watan* certificate (*watanpatra*) issued by King Shahu's government to two Brahmin brothers surnamed Chandrachud, half accountant and half astrologer (*ninme* Kulkarni va Jyotishi) of Village Nimbgaon Nagana, Khed region, Junnar province, dated October 17, 1740. The record may be translated as follows:

"(Date, names of addressees, their professions etc.) You came to the camp of Satara and requested His Majesty (*swami*) as follows:

⁷⁴ SSRPD, vol. VI, no. 816.

⁷⁵ Hiroshi Fukazawa, "Lands and Peasants in the 18th Century Maratha Kingdom", *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.

⁷⁶ SSRPD, vol. VII, no. 546, p. 156 (right).

‘Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre of Atri clan (*gotra*), accountant and astrologer of the above village, has no son (*putrasantān*). (She) had to repay a debt incurred in connection with the *watans* as well as for living (*yogakshem*), and, getting old, wanted to do some offering (*dana dharma*). Therefore (she) offered half the *watans* (*ninme vatan*) to her son-in-law (*jānvai*), Lakshman Govind surnamed Tallu, and, coming to our house, sold (*vikat dilhen*) to us for Rs. 2,000 the other half *watans* of accountancy and astrology above mentioned, along with customary remunerations (*kānūkāyade*) and house of her own accord (*aple khush rajāvandineñ*). And (she) gave (us) sales-deed (*khare-dikhat*) and certificate of local assembly (*gotāchā mahājar*). (We) showed them to Peshwa Bajirao and got him to grant a certificate (of the Peshwa government). Your Majesty, please take them into account, grant a *watan* certificate and make us carry on hereditarily.’

(You) petitioned like this, and submitted sales-deed, certificate of local assembly, and certificate of the Peshwa to the presence of King.

‘Sales-deed. I, Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre of Atri clan, accountant and astrologer (*Kulkarni va Jyotishi ashtādhikāri*) of Village Nimbgaon Nagana, Khed region of Junnar province, write and hand over the following sales-deed to Mr. Baji Eshwant and Mr. Gangadhar Eshwant surnamed Chandrachud, working under the Deshpande of Junnar province, on the first day of the second half of the seventh month (*ashvin vadya*), the year 1656 named *anand* in Shaka era, the year 1135 in Suhur era, and the year 1144 (in Fasli era; 1734 A.D.).

‘Accountancy (*kulkarnā*) and astrologership (*jyotishpanā*) of the above village are (our) old *watans*. I have, however, neither son nor anyone of kindred (to succeed the *watans*). I have lived alone. There has been no increase of kindred (*vanshavridh*) to carry on the family occupation (*vritti*) and service to the village (*pāndharichī sevā*). (I) lost the hope, getting old, wanted to come to the end of my life by doing some offering, and had to repay a debt incurred for my living and family occupation. For these reasons, I offered to my son-in-law named . . . half the *watans*, along with house and customary remunerations, out of the accountancy and astrologership of the above village, which had been my old *watans*. And I have come to your house, bowed my head before you, sold to you the other half *watans*, including house and customary remunerations, out of the *watans* of accountancy and astrologership above mentioned, along with the seniority (*vadilpanā*), and accepted Rs. 2,000 from you. The right half of the house is given to you, and the left half to Lakshman Govind (my son-in-law). Reside in the right (half), and live happily generation after generation.

‘The payment (*mushāhira*) for accountancy is 60 *takes* or Rs. 24 and three *khandis* of grains (perhaps about 750 kilograms) (probably per year). Take a half of them and give the other half to Lakshman Govind, and enjoy hereditarily (*ninme tuhmiñ gheñēñ va ninme Lakshman Govind yāñst deññ vanshparanpareñēñ anabhāvūñ rāhanēñ*). (Besides) privileges (*mān*) for accountancy and astrologership are as follows:

Privileges for accountancy (shown to the left and right sides on the same page).
(Seven items to the left side)

1. The turban granted by the government should be received next to the headman.
1. The oil from the oil-presser (Teli) should be received from each shop daily per 9 *tanks* (a *tank* being from 3 to 13 grams in different localities).
1. A pair of shoes from leather-worker per year.

1. Water from water-carriers (Koli) should be received next to the headman.
1. A bundle of firewood (from Mahars ?) on festival days (*saṇa*).
1. The oil for ink and the cloth for covering documents are to be taken from the village (fund).
1. Betel leaves to be taken from betel leaves-seller should be received at half the amount taken by the headman.

Total seven items

(Six items to the right side)

1. On the Dewali and Dasahara festivals performance of music (by musicians at the door) is to be done next to the headman.
1. The share (*seva*) to be taken from gardeners should be received next to the headman.
1. The shares (*utpann*) to be taken as the right from (the offerings dedicated to) the shrine of the god Maltand (an incarnation of Shiva) as follows.
 - a. (A cash of) two and half *takes* on the monthly full moon festival.
 - b. Turmeric-powder (for blessing) (*bhandarprasād*) is to be taken next to the headman.
 - c. Frankincense is to be received once the month next to the headman on Sundays of the seventh month (*ashvin* of the Hindu calendar).
 - d. On the full moon festival of the seventh month sweets should be received at half the amount taken by the headman.

Total six items

Rights for Astrologership

1. The *baluta*-remuneration of the equal amount as that for shrine-keeper.
2. Share of the offering to the shrine equal to that taken by (other) *baluta*-servants.
3. *Inām* land of 25 *bighas* (about 8 hectares) (with the produce) of 12.5 *mans* (of grains, probably about 157 kilograms).

Total three items

‘As shown above there are 13 items of privileges for accountancy. Take a half of them yourselves and give the other half to Lakshman Govind. Regarding the shares of the rights for astrologership, too, take a half and give the other to Lakshman Govind. I have given (sold) to you half the accountancy and astrologership mentioned above. Taking the various emoluments (*mānpān*, *hakk*, *utpann*, *vagaire lājime*) live happily and enjoy hereditarily. Also I have given you the right half out of my patrimonial house-site (*mirāschā gharthānā*) and the left half to Lakshman Govind. If anyone of mine or I raise an objection to this matter my ancestors will bring a curse upon us. I have written and handed this sales-deed over to you’.

In this way (you) have brought and shown the sales-deed, the certificate attested by local assembly (*mahājar gotāche sākshinishīn*) and the certificate of the Peshwa. It has been clearly established by taking them into consideration that you have bought a half accountancy and a half astrologership of the above village along with customary remunerations and house from Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre, for Rs. 2,000. Accordingly His Majesty (*swami*) granting his favour on you has confirmed upon you and your descendants generation after generation, a half accountancy *watan* and a half astrologership *watan* of the above village along with house, payment for accountancy, *inām*, customary remunerations (*hakk lājime kāmūkāyade*), seniority and turban from the government, in accordance with the sales-deed, and granted this *watan* certificate. Holding the

above *watans* yourselves perform the service of the *watans*, enjoy the *watans* for yourselves and your descendants, and live happily. A tribute of Rs. 500 is imposed upon you in two instalments in connection with the *watans*. Pay it and live happily.”⁷⁷

Three points may be explained regarding the record translated above. First, the term *vadilpaṇa* appears several times. This is the antonym to *dhāktepaṇa* in Marathi, means to be ancestors, father, elder brothers, and seniors in general and may be properly translated into ‘seniority’. Likewise *dhāktepaṇa* means ‘juniority’. These two terms were (even now are) often used in Marathi in connection with division of family or patrimonial properties; the holder of seniority had social (but not always economic) privileges of occupying a superior seat in a meeting, stamping the occupational seal upon documents, and having priority in receiving the emoluments and gifts, for instance. In the above record the Chandrachuds who bought half the *watans* held the seniority, and Lakshman Govind offered with the other half *watans* had juniority. Second, as mentioned before, there is difference of opinions among modern scholars as to whether village-accountant was included in *baluta*-servants. In the record shown above as the 13 items of privileges for accountancy do not contain the *baluta*-remuneration, this accountant was not considered a *baluta*-servant. But he was a *baluta*-servant as the astrologer. And third, castes such as water-carriers, betel-leaves-sellers and gardeners appear in this record. As mentioned before they belonged to a category called twelve *alutas* in modern works and different from *baluta*-servants. But as mentioned before we are not concerned here with so-called *alutas*.

Now the above record shows at least four important points with regard to the division of *baluta*-*watans*.

First, the division of astrologer’s *watan* into two did not mean the emergence of two *watans* of astrology, but two half *watans*, and *watan* of astrology remained one after the division as before. This indicates that the *baluta*-servants were not employed by specific individual families directly but were to serve the village as one territorial unity.

Second, the object of division was not the ‘service-sphere’ but the ‘emolument’ comprising house or house-site, *inām* land, and various remunerations in kind and in cash. Regarding two families of astrologers shown in this record, they were expected to divide house or house-site as well as *inām* land into two equal shares, and then the ‘senior family’ was to receive all the remunerations in kind and in cash and to give a half of them to the ‘junior family’; but nothing is mentioned to the effect that the two families divided the village or the sphere of service into two parts, for instance, according to the number of families of villagers. This indicates that the two families were simultaneously engaged in the work of astrology for the sake of the village as a whole.

Incidentally, not the astrology but some more official service like village-accountancy may have been faced with technical inconvenience if plural accountants existed in a village and were engaged simultaneously in the same profession. What arrangement was made in such a case is not shown in the above record. But in other record pertaining to Village Diya of Saswad region, when the accountancy was divided among a kinship group into two, the following was arranged between two branches: “you (the senior branch) are expected to eat the accountancy for three years, and we (the junior branch) for three years. But

⁷⁷ SSRPD, vol. I, no. 283.

during the five years out of the (first) six years, your (senior) three families should do the accountancy for three years, and we (junior branch) for two years in consideration of the (common) debt repaid (by the senior families)."⁷⁸ Whether the village-accountant was included among the *baluta* servants, here it is clear that the service-sphere for accountancy was not divided but the service was rotated between them.

At any rate, on the basis of the above evidences it may be generally stated that division of *baluta-watan* was not a division of service-sphere but a division of emoluments. In other words repeated division of a *watan* did not lead to the transformation of a *baluta*-servant from 'the servant of the village' to 'the servant of certain specific families'.

Thirdly, division of a *baluta-watan* into two did not mean the total amount of emolument being doubled; amount of emolument for the whole *watan* remained the same as before. That is, amount of burden for the whole villagers, and more especially for the whole peasants did not change due to the division. Accordingly it may be said that increase in the number of shares in a *watan* caused by its division or partial transfer was not itself a serious concern for the villagers. Therefore the division, transfer or sale of a *watan* could be carried out without 'permission' or 'consent' of the villagers as a whole, but merely with the voluntary will of the *watan*-holder. In other words, the main reason for the *baluta-watan* having the village as its service-sphere on the one hand, and yet being considered the 'patrimony' of its holders and able to be disposed of by their (or his) will on the other was, it may be fairly presumed, that no change occurred in the amount of burden of villagers along with such a disposal.

And fourthly, that division, transfer or sale of a *baluta-watan* could be carried out by the voluntary will of its holder and did not require the 'permission' or 'consent' of the village as a whole did not mean that the village as a group was in no way concerned with the transactions of *baluta-watan*. It may be stated as shown in the above record that for such a transaction to be effective 'confirmation by local assembly' (*gotāche sākshī*) and 'the certificate of the local assembly' (*gotāche mahājar*) were required.

Now we may summarize our findings on the 'twelve *baluta*-servants' of the 18th century Maharashtrian village as follows:

Firstly, there were *baluta*-servants who held their occupation as *watan* or patrimony and who were merely strangers employed on temporary basis. In other words to conceive that all the village-servants held hereditary monopoly of their respective job in the village is a clear misunderstanding. Such a fixed state of affairs must have been impossible in reality; those who held hereditary monopoly sometimes transferred or sold their rights or left their sphere of service when necessary on the one hand, and there were, on the other, 'migratory servants' so to speak who looked for a vacancy in the *watan* system and filled it up provisionally.

Secondly, whether *watan*-holders or not, *baluta*-servants were conceived as 'the servants of the village'. In other words the village as a territorial whole was their sphere of service, and they offered their respective service to individual villagers and more especially to individual peasants belonging to this territorial community.

⁷⁸ Oturkar, no. 48. "tīn varshe tumhī kulkarna khāve tīn varse āmhī khāve tyāsi sā varsāchī pāch varse varasī kharchvechāmule tharvalyāpaikī tīn varshe tumhī tigharāni kulkarna karāve va don varshe āmhī kavāvi."

Thirdly, regarding the emoluments for the *baluta*-servants, the *baluta*-remuneration was paid by the *peasants* in kind or in cash at the time of harvest, and this was enjoyed both by *watan*-holding servants and *watanless* ones, so long as they worked for the village. On the other hand various additional 'perquisites' were borne by all the villagers including peasants on various occasions and under various pretexts, but it is not very clear if *watanless* servants were also entitled to them equally as *watan*-holders, though it may be presumed that they were. Again there were some *baluta*-servants who were granted with a small plot of *inām* land by the village or by the government. This was so enjoyed hereditarily that only *watan*-holding servants are presumed to have held it.

And fourthly, there was conceived to be one *baluta-watan* per occupation in a village. Division of the *watan* did not increase its number; each sharer was conceived to have its fraction. Moreover what was divided was not the sphere of service but the emoluments. Therefore so far as *baluta*-servants were concerned they were not transformed from 'the servants of the village' to 'the servants of certain specific families' in the process of division of *watan*. If they turned to be 'the servants of families' in later period as suggested by recent sociological works in various parts of India, they did so, it may be presumed, not because of any logical necessity inherent in the *baluta* system, but because of the changes and decays of the village system as a whole.

The above summary is only tentative on the basis of very limited number of evidences and subject to modification whenever new evidences contrary to it are discovered.

Now not all the servants who worked in the 18th century Maharashtrian village were either *baluta*-servants or so-called *aluta*-servants. There were some others such as priests (*upādhyāy*). To my knowledge many of them seem to have served certain specific families and been supported by them. We shall turn to them next.

III. *Servants Employed by Families—Especially the Priests*

In the Marathi records we sometimes come across the term *grāmopādhyāy* (priest of the village).⁷⁹ Therefore there seem to have been priests employed by the village as a whole. But we can not make it clear how they functioned in the village.

Generally speaking, however, routine ceremonies performed in connection with sacred thread, marriage, ancestors and so on in Hindu society have been essentially family ceremonies accompanied by complicate rituals and *mantras* more or less different in accordance with family-god (*kulaswami*), caste and religious sect of the people concerned. Religious events not directly concerned with life-cycle of the Hindus such as seasonal festivals, and festivities of the tutelary god or goddess of the village and other Hindu divinities seem to have been usually performed at the village-shrine as collective activities; yet rites of life-cycle were performed at home with the participation of officiating priests as well as close kinship group.⁸⁰

The priests, specialists of such rites, were usually Brahmins by caste. Exception should be mentioned, however, in this regard: as the priest was as a rule invited at home and was to

⁷⁹ For instance, *SSRPD*, vol. V, no. 206.

⁸⁰ See P.N. Prabhu, *Hindu Social Organization*, new rev. ed., Bombay, 1954, chap. VI, "The Family."

officiate the rite he could not do so at the home of untouchable castes such as Mahars, leather-workers, rope-makers and so on. He could officiate the rite only at the home of 'clean castes' (*shuddh jāti*). Among the untouchables there were special priests belonging to the untouchable caste.⁸¹ Excepting for such cases, we may safely assume that priests were Brahmins by caste so far as 'clean castes' were concerned. The Hindu shrine-keepers often referred to in this article were not priests as such but merely managers or attendants of shrines, and they were considered to be Shudras.

At any rate as the rites of life-cycle among the Hindus were complicate family events different according to caste, sect, family-god and so on, priest for such rites seems to have tended to serve only certain specific families.

To the best of my knowledge there are following two records from Saswad region which show that priests were in direct clientele relationship with specific individual families.

Record No. 1. This record dated February 7, 1746 was written by three land-holding peasants (*thalvāi*) surnamed Jadav of Village Diya of the above region to two Brahmins surnamed Pansi, accountants and astrologers of the same village. It may be translated as follows:

“(Date in Shaka era, names and occupations of the addressees, names of the addressers, Shuhur year, and Fasli year) Mr. Kando Shivdeva Pansi (one of the two addressees) came to us and told, ‘since olden time your priesthood (*tumche upādhepana*) has been ours. Your ancestors used to let our ancestors perform the rites. Until now you are also doing the same. Recently, however, your steward (*majmudar*) Ragho Anant telling a lie started a dispute with us. We do not understand this. You and we are brothers bound by *watan* (*watandār bhāū*). In accordance with the ancestral usage you and we should behave’. Then, in our thought, you are original priests (*mūl upādhe*). We shall make you officiate the rites generation after generation just according as our ancestors used to pay the perquisites (*mānpān*) for priesthood to your ancestors. Steward Ragho Anant has nothing to dispute with you. Ragho Anant is doing the work (*kārbhār*) with us in his own way (? *yekhatyarine*), and therefore we did not know (his dispute). If an adverse time (*kālkālā*) takes place hereafter when (we) grant document (of priesthood to him) or appoint (him) to priesthood from our carelessness, (we shall) remove him. Ragho Anant, his relatives or any others have no reason anywhere to trouble your priesthood at our family (*ghar*) or at the family (*ghar*) of our kinship group (*bhauband*). You and your kinship group of the Pansis should enjoy upto your descendants priesthood of our family (*āmche gharche upādhepana*), worship of gods (*deva devatārchan*), spiritual guidance (*āchyāryatvañ*), rite of offering (*dāndharmāsh*), sacrifice for fire and god (*hāvekāve*), marriage (*lagna*), re-marriage (*muhūrta*) and other perquisites (*mānpān*) with complete peace of mind, and perform the priesthood hereditarily and freely from care. If we deviate from you on this matter, curse of our family-god will fall upon us and our kinship group. Please carry on the profession of your priesthood (*āple upādhepanāchī birt*) with contented mind both in home country (*shvadesī*) and foreign country (*videsī*).”⁸²

Record No. 2. This record is also from Sawad region, but its first half is unfortunately

⁸¹ Hiroshi Fukazawa, “State and Caste System (*jāti*) in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Kingdom”, *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, vol. 9, no. 1, June 1968, p. 43.

⁸² Oturkar, no. 49.

lost. At the end of the record there are two lines: "This statement is written and submitted. By the hand of Mahadaji Balal Gokhale, revenue-farmer and accountant of the above village," and, "Such are written in the seven items above. Signed by Narashinbhat Bapat dated the 10th day of the second half of the 4th month in the year 1696 in Shaka era, the year called *jaya* (August 1, 1774 A.D.)."⁸³ The name of the 'above village' as well as the first two of the 'seven items above' are, however, not shown for the first half of the record is lost.

At any rate it appears that a Brahmin named Narashinbhat Bāpat had this record written by Mahadaji Balal Gokhale, which was a statement submitted by the former to some local assembly when a dispute started over a priesthood in a village between him and another Brahmin surnamed Paranjapye. Of the five items shown in the existing record only significant parts will be translated as follows:

1. When Brahmin clients belonging to Apastanbha or Rigvedi sect (*āpastanbha athvā rugvedī yejmān*) perform great rite (*māhā anushtān*) at the shrine dedicated to god Vishveshvar (an incarnate of Shiva), the guidance (*āchāryapana*) and putting the fire on the altar (*kundmaḍap*) are ours (Bāpat's).
2. At the families of Rigvedi Brahmins, the second water-pot (? *dusrā kalash*) as well as *brahmatva* (?) are ours and the priesthood (*upādhepana*) is Paranjapye's.
3. There is no dispute between us and Paranjapye regarding the priesthood for Brahmins. Both the parties are carrying on as before. (the rest omitted)
4. Dispute has been going on for the last two or four years as regard to the priesthood for peasants (*kunbi*). (the rest omitted)
5. Our ancestors have been carrying on the priesthood of the families of peasant and other castes of the above village (*mauje majkūrche kunbi vagaire khūm yāche gharche upādhyepana*), and Paranjapye is carrying on (the priesthood of) some (families). While this was the case, Bālanbhat Paranjape, father of Lakshmanbhat Paranjape, gave some (money) to shrine-keeper (Gurao), Marāthā by caste, and several peasants (*kulbi*) of the village, collected them to the shrine dedicated to a goddess, and formed a party (*kat*) by saying, 'let us expel such peasants (*kunbi*, the last two letters *bi* and following several words lost) . . . who support the priest (Bāpat) from their caste,' and putting five coconuts on five places.⁸⁴ (the rest omitted)

Three points should be particularly noted in the above record. Firstly the term *yejmān* appears in the sense of clients *vis-à-vis* a Brahmin priest: proto-type of the so-called jajmani system.

Secondly, although Priest Bapat conducted the guidance and one more function at the 'great rite' performed by Brahmin clients at the shrine as well as some specific functions at the ceremonies instituted at Brahmin families, the priesthood as such at the rites of Brahmin families was performed by another priest surnamed Paranjapye. Bapat's priesthood was limited to the families of 'peasant and other castes', who may be collectively called 'clean Shudras'. This indicates that the principle delimiting the service-sphere for a priest was not the territorial principle like a village but pseudo-consanguinity of caste as an endogamous group. The fact that though 'peasant and other castes' served by

⁸³ *Ibid.*, no. 66, p. 47.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Bapat are stated to have been of 'the above village', nothing is mentioned of the Brahmins served by Paranjapye as to where they resided also suggests that the sphere of service for a priest was determined not by territorial but by pseudo-consanguineous principle. Moreover, it is also not clear regarding both Bapat and Paranjapye whether they resided in 'the above village'. As the first part of the record is lost we can not say definitely; yet it is quite possible that they or one of them resided in some other village or town not very far from 'the above village'. At any rate it may be fairly repeated that sphere of service for a family priest tended to be confined to certain specific caste (or castes).

And thirdly, Parajapye had been the priest of Brahmin families since 'before', and Bapat was likewise the family priest of 'peasant and other castes' since 'ancestors'. This means that both held their priesthood hereditarily in fact. This record does not, however, clarify whether their *hereditary* service-sphere was confined to certain caste (or castes) or to certain specific families belonging to such caste (or castes). This point is important when we remember that there were broadly two classes among the peasants as well as among the rural servants: landholding peasants (*mirāsdārs*, *thalkaris* or *thālvāis*) and temporary peasants (*uparis*) among peasantry; and *watan*-holding servants (*watandar balute*) and temporary servants (*uparī balute*) among rural servants. In other words whereas families of landholding peasants as well as *watan*-holding rural servants could employ a certain priest on the permanent basis (that is, hereditarily) as is clearly shown in the Record No. 1 above unless they disposed of their family property entirely and left the village for ever, temporary peasants and servants could not do so in principle however long they may have resided in the same village. They could employ a priest suitable for their caste (or castes) on *ad hoc* basis. Accordingly the 'peasant and other castes' shown in the fifth item of the above Record No. 2 may be presumed to have included both permanent and temporary clients for Bapat.

IV. *Summary and Conclusion*

We may summarize our tentative findings as follows:

First, the servants in the 18th century Maharashtrian village who were categorized into 'twelve *baluta*-servants' served and were maintained by the village as a territorial whole. In this sense the old theory or demiurgic theory as we put at the beginning of this article as against the new theory or jajmani theory was correct. But there was a clear distinction amongst them between those who held their sphere of service and accompanying emoluments as their *watan* or patrimony and those who did not have such a *watan* and worked in a certain village for a temporary period (namely *uparis*).

And secondly, there were priests (*upādhyāy*) in the village as well. They were Brahmins by caste and often concurrently worked as village-accountants and (or) astrologers. The service-sphere of a priest was determined not by the territorial principle but by pseudo-consanguineous principle. That is, his service-sphere tended to be limited to certain caste (or castes). This was, it may be presumed, due to the fact that routine rites among the Hindus were intensely various for the different castes. Moreover, ceremonies of life-cycle among the Hindus were essentially family rites performed at individual families, so that the priest tended to serve certain specific families of certain caste (or castes). Such families (*yejmān*) were, however, either permanent or temporary clients of the priest in accordance

with their economic status.

In short the new (jajmani) theory propounded by the recent sociologists on rural India is acceptable for the family priesthood, but not for the twelve *baluta*-servants so far as the 18th century Maharashtra is concerned. At the same time, however, there is hardly any doubt as is empirically demonstrated by a number of modern sociological works that in many parts of modern India many of the rural servants were until recently (or are even now to a great extent) under the mode of employment that may be termed jajmani. Then this may indicate that during the British period the territorial social group called village was greatly disorganized or disintegrated so that village-servants were transformed into family-servants. But unfortunately for us, sociological surveys on modern rural Maharashtra are so scarce that we are unable now to compare our findings with the modern state of affairs. It is yet to be studied whether the mode of employment which can be categorized as jajmani system can be widely found among the former *baluta*-servants in the modern rural Maharashtra. Finally, however, it may be interesting to note that H.H. Mann still regarded the *baluta*-servants in the two Maharashtrian villages as essentially 'servants of the village' during 1910's.⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ H.H. Mann, *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village*, Oxford University Press, 1917, pp. 132-33; Do., *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village*, Study No. 2, Oxford University Press, 1921, pp. 122-23.